

Agent of Change



Crossing the southern part of Shivpur village, you can hear the carefully timed soft clicking of Taramani's Container-making machine. Going into his machine room, you will find Taramani operating the machine like he was born to do it. Taramani is 35 years old, from Village, Shivpur, Mirzapur district of Uttar Pradesh.

In 2003, eight years after working on his father's farm, Taramani decided to look for a job in the neighboring temple belt of Vindhyachal. This belt is full of colorful narrow lanes leading to various temples, with shops selling offerings to the gods and goddesses. Containers filled with vermilion are an important part of these offerings, which are bought in large quantities by devotees and priests every day. Taramani decided to work at a small factory that manufactured these containers and also learned how to make them.

It took him only fifteen days to perfect the process, maybe because of his natural skill of sculpting with clay. He recalls, "When I was in school, I made clay toys in the evening. I had a keen interest in solving measurement problems and loved visiting my father at a temple where he worked casually." In 2006, realising the high market demand for the containers, Taramani bought a machine for manufacturing these from his house. He traveled to the nearby city of Varanasi twice a month to purchase plastic beads - the primary raw material. To keep the production rolling even when he was not around, Taramani hired two men, whom he paid piece rate wages. He established a marketing network for his products using the networks he had developed while working in Vindhyachal. Over the years, he expanded his customer base by using promotion material like pamphlets and business cards. A regular buyer, whom he calls the Mahajan, purchases containers from Taramani monthly. On average, Taramani was selling seventy-two hundred containers every month, which gives him monthly revenue of fifty thousand rupees. In July 2018, Taramani started participating in stakeholder coalition meetings with enterprise service providers and other entrepreneurs. At one of the meetings, he shared his vision for expanding his enterprise and connected with a representative of a micro-credit institution that offered him a loan of thirty-five thousand rupees. Taramani received the loan after a few days and invested in purchasing another container manufacturing machine, with which he enhanced his production capacity. He also diversified his enterprise by manufacturing accessories in addition to the containers. He bought more raw materials, like dye, to make the containers more colorful. And to make the final product, he started filling these with vermilion. Taramani proudly claims that his profit has increased by sixty percent in the last six months by adding vermilion to the containers.

Taramani is an active member of the stakeholder coalition meetings for enterprise development in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and plays an instrumental role in informing discussions by bringing the voices of his community to the forefront and getting information for growing his enterprise. Taramani has also linked his community members with members of the coalition for accessing information and credit for the growth of their enterprise. He shares, "I started attending the coalition meetings in July and have been attending all meetings since then. I find the interactions very useful; everyone always leaves the room with new ideas." Taramani plans to expand the reach of his enterprise to temples within a radius of two hundred and twenty-five kilometers.